Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.-9. (canceled)

10. (currently amended) A method for controlling a network element in a communication network, the method comprising:

providing a plurality of behavior rules by the network element;

autonomously selecting a behavior rule according to operating conditions by the network element, the behavior rule formulated in a central control entity assigned to the network element; and

forwarding data packets in accordance with the selected behavior rule by the network element.

11. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 10, wherein the operating conditions are given by any combination of line interruption, node failure, network loading, connection establishment, or network reconfiguration.

12. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 10, wherein a behavior rule contains a selection of one of a plurality of paths.

13. (previously presented) The method according to Claim 11, wherein a behavior rule contains a selection of one of a plurality of paths.

14. (canceled)

15. (canceled)

16.   (canceled)

17.   (canceled)

18.   (canceled)

19.   (previously presented) The method according to Claim 10, wherein the behavior rules can be delivered to the network element by way of network management from a control entity superordinated to a plurality of network elements.

20.   (previously presented) The method according to Claim 11, wherein the behavior rules can be delivered to the network element by way of network management from a control entity superordinated to a plurality of network elements.

21.   (previously presented) The method according to Claim 10, wherein the behavior rules are created automatically.

22.   (previously presented) The method according to. Claim 11, wherein the behavior rules are created automatically.

23.   (previously presented) The method according to Claim 12, wherein the behavior rules are created automatically.

24.   (previously presented) The method according to Claim 10, wherein the method is used in a packet-oriented and/or connectionless communication network.

25.   (previously presented) The method according to Claim 10, wherein the network element autonomously or independently selects a behavior rule according to the operating conditions.

26.   (currently amended) A method for coupling a plurality of network elements, comprising:

providing control entities, each assigned to a network element;

    <u>providing a plurality of behavior rules by the network element, the behavior rules formulated in the control entities assigned to the network element;</u> and

coupling <u>at least</u> two control entities by a protocol by way of which they exchange information for ~~the~~ <u>a</u> harmonization of behavior rules.

27.   (currently amended) A method for coupling a plurality of network elements, comprising:

providing control entities, each assigned to a network element;

providing a plurality of behavior rules by the network element<u>, the behavior rules formulated in the control entities assigned to the network element</u>;

<u>autonomously</u> selecting a behavior rule according to operating conditions by the network element;

forwarding data packets in accordance with the selected behavior rule by the network element; and

coupling <u>at least</u> two control entities by a protocol by way of which they exchange information for ~~the~~ <u>a</u> harmonization of behavior rules.

28.   (previously presented) The method according to Claim 27, wherein the method is used in a packet-oriented and/or connectionless communication network.

29.   (previously presented) The method according to Claim 27, wherein the network element autonomously or independently selects a behavior rule according to the operating conditions.